

March 29, 2006  
Volume 4, Issue 1

# The American Embassy Newsletter

## Embassy of the United States of America to Lithuania

### Message from Ambassador Mull

#### **Special Features:**

- Message from Ambassador Mull
- What to do if You are Pulled Over by the Traffic Police
- Voting
- Jazz Night
- Insurance

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This month, we have worked closely with our Lithuanian friends in shining a light on the disturbing human rights violations taking place only 20 miles away from Vilnius in Belarus, where sham elections featuring arrests of legitimate democratic activists recently propelled President Lukashenko into another term of office. This is not an easy issue for our hosts – a substantial portion of Lithuania's energy supply transits Belarus; Lithuanian ports rely on substantial traffic from Belarusian sources; and the 676-kilometer border the two countries share raises a plethora of issues that require close and detailed engagement with the Minsk authorities. While pursuing and defending those interests, as they should, Lithuanian policy makers staunchly believe that Lithuania's and the transatlantic community's supreme interest in Belarus is in promoting freedom and democracy. And they have pursued that vision with a vigor that has inspired the rest of Europe to work harder to end one of the world's last dictatorships. Lithuania has offered a home to the European Humanities University, which Minsk had brutally closed; marshaled resources to support free broadcasting into Belarus; and has become a source of important support to Belarus' growing civil society movement. The United States will be proud to continue its intense diplomatic partnership with Lithuania and our other friends in Europe to secure the same benefits of political liberalization that the rest of Central and Eastern Europe has enjoyed for more than the past 15 years.

Another important milestone in Lithuania's work on our common freedom agenda will be in May, when it will host a major summit of the newest democracies to emerge from the former Soviet Union to chart a course for securing the amazing gains in democracy in this part of the world. The United States plans to participate in the summit at a senior level to show support for the efforts of our Lithuanian friends.

Meanwhile, we at the Embassy continue our work to promote even closer ties between the United States and Lithuania. Earlier this year, we announced a new initiative to attract more foreign students and business leaders to visit the United States, and we hope that many more Lithuanians will heed the call. For their part, the Lithuanians continue to make steady progress on meeting U.S. legislative requirements for participation in the Visa Waiver Program, most notably by recently committing to the issuance of biometric passports which will be among the most secure in the world. But we still have work to do in reducing the number of Lithuanian visitors who do not abide by the terms of their visas in visiting the United States before removal of the visa requirement can become a reality.

Finally, within a few months, I will be finishing my assignment as your Ambassador here to return to Washington. It has been the highlight of my professional life to serve the United States and all of you in promoting America's interests here among such warm friends and allies as the Lithuanian people. I wish all of you continued success in your association with this amazing country, and hope to have the chance to work with you again.

With best regards,  
Steve Mull

## News from the Regional Security Office

### *What to do if you are pulled over by the traffic police*

If you are pulled over for a traffic infraction, the police officer will take your driver's license, fill out a "Protocol of Traffic Infraction" form, and determine a penalty/fine according to the infraction's seriousness. What happens next depends on whether you have a Lithuanian driver's license or not.

For those with Lithuanian licenses, police regulations will require as of May 1 that all fines be paid through a bank. The police should not retain your license.

If you do not have a Lithuanian license but agree with the validity of the decision and the fine, you may pay it on the spot if the fine does not exceed 50Lt. You should receive a receipt and your license. Then you are free to go.

If the fine is over 50Lt and you do not have a Lithuanian license, you must pay it through a bank. This distinction in amount is both a measure of the infraction's severity and an anticorruption measure. Needless to say, you should not pay a bribe; trying to do so could get you into a much worse situation.

If you do not have a Lithuanian license and do not pay on the spot, the traffic police will retain your driver's license. They will issue you a temporary license that looks like a receipt stating that you have a pending traffic case. You must carry another photo ID in order to drive with this temporary license. The receipt is valid for one month, which should be enough time to have a decision made on the case (see below).

Licenses are confiscated for even the most minor offenses. You get your license back only after a decision is made and the fine paid. You are obligated to bring the receipt back to the police because the bank account is administered by the tax authority and not the police. You should keep a copy of the receipt for your records.

With or without a Lithuanian driver's license, if you disagree with the police officer's determination, the "Protocol of Traffic Infraction" form is sent to the local Traffic Police department. In Vilnius, it is located at Giraites 3. The Traffic Police appoint an investigator who reviews the case and conducts an investigation if necessary. The investigator makes a final determination of the penalty and fine. The investigator must also officially inform you of the decision and invite you by registered mail to come to the department for a hearing. You are not obligated to attend, and the final decision will be made even if you are absent. Final decisions are very rarely different from initial decisions. After the hearing date, you will be informed of the final decision and must make payment within 20 days. If payment is not made in this period, the case goes to a bailiff for enforcement.

If you obtain a Lithuanian driver's license, you must turn in your U.S. license, which will eventually be forwarded to the Embassy's Consular Section for you to claim. If you are registered with us, we will contact you using the information you provided.

If you encounter any problems or irregularities on the road with the traffic police, please don't hesitate to let the Embassy know by e-mailing [consec@state.gov](mailto:consec@state.gov) or calling 266 5500.



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*Our Embassy Attorneys List:*

<http://www.usembassy.lt/Text/Docs/Consular/lawyers.htm>

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## News from the Consular Section

### *Residency Permits*

Consular Section representatives met with representatives from the Migration Department and other Government of Lithuania agencies in February. The Migration representative confirmed that Migration aims to process residence permits within 90 days. We hope they are able to meet this goal. The law, which allows for up to six months for processing, has not changed, but Migration currently processes most residence permits in much less time. They will not always be able to issue permits in less than 90 days, but if the current processing rate becomes the standard, it will alleviate many of the residence permit difficulties Americans face. There will be no need for foreign residents to leave the country to avoid being illegal after 90 days.

The Government of Lithuania recommends that residency permit applicants submit their application paperwork to the Lithuanian Embassy or Consulate before departing the United States. We have learned that this does not actually begin the permit issuance process; it serves simply as a review of the paperwork for completeness and accuracy. Migration still recommends that all American citizens intending to reside in Lithuania contact the Lithuanian Embassy or relevant Consulate in the United States before coming to Lithuania to learn how to obtain residence permits. The Lithuanian Migration Department web site ([www.migracija.lt](http://www.migracija.lt)) also has information on requirements and procedures. American citizens should collect all the required documents in the United States and apply for permits upon arrival in Lithuania. Please feel free to pass this information along to colleagues or acquaintances planning on residing in Lithuania!

For those of you with work permits, one potentially useful tip emerged from our February meeting. After you submit the paperwork for a work permit to the Labor Exchange (Darbo Birza), the Exchange issues a receipt which you can submit in applying for your residency permit. In other words, these two processes can run concurrently. Many of you may be aware of this already, but we want to make sure that everyone knows about this time-saving option.

It is our understanding that one change, in compliance with EU Directive 2004/38/EB, should come into effect on April 30 and may benefit some of you. As of that date, immediate family members of EU citizens will not be considered out of status as long as the residence permit application was filed within the period of legal admission. In other words, in the future, if you are married to an EU citizen and apply for a residency permit within 90 days of your arrival, you will not be considered illegal even if you do not receive the permit until after the 90 days have passed. If you think you may benefit from this change, please consult with a competent attorney.

We appreciate the feedback on residency permit issues we get from many of you. While we cannot engage the Government of Lithuania directly on individual cases, please continue to pass along as much detail as you are comfortable sharing, including specific dates. We use the information to assess the current situation and to illustrate the difficulties you face when we engage the Government of Lithuania. It is most useful to us in writing, so please feel free to e-mail us at [consec@state.gov](mailto:consec@state.gov) or fax us at 266 5590.

For a more detailed discussion of residency permits, please see our last newsletter [www.usembassy.lt/Text/docs/consular/AENL6.doc](http://www.usembassy.lt/Text/docs/consular/AENL6.doc)



***"Responsibility Has No Borders. Vote!"***

--winning slogan, 2005 Federal Voting Assistance Program contest

Election Day (November 7) may seem far away, but election season has already begun. Illinois and Texas already held their primary elections and Indiana, North Carolina and Ohio have primaries on May 2. Especially for those of us overseas, it is important to start the registration and absentee ballot request processes early.

All U.S. citizens who are 18 years old on Election Day may register to vote. Keep in mind, though, that the issues of voting residence and registration can be complex. Luckily the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act allows citizens outside the U.S. to vote in the state or territory where they resided immediately prior to departing the United States, even if many years have passed and the voter maintains no residence in the state or territory.

To register to vote or request an absentee ballot if you are already registered, you can submit a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to the appropriate state/local election official. In some states, registration may not be necessary to vote. Therefore, it is important to determine your state of voting residence and find out what the requirements are for your state. To obtain a FPCA or for more information, please visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program web site at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov), your state's official web site, or come see us in the Consular Section to review a copy of the Federal Voting Assistance Guide.

Some states or territories such as Michigan require voter registration materials to be notarized. We provide this service free of charge during our American Citizen Services hours.

We look forward to helping you make your voice heard this election year!

## News from the Public Affairs Section

### *Happy Birthday, George!*

February 22, the American Center welcomed Lithuanian students, teachers, and librarians to a book presentation and lecture on George Washington, in celebration and honor of the president's 274th birthday. The event showcased a violin ensemble from the local M.K. Čiurlionis Art Gymnasium that treated the audience to American ragtime tunes by Scott Joplin and other concert pieces. We distributed biographies of our first president translated into Lithuanian to many schools and public libraries. We still have some books left, so if you know a local library or school that would like a copy, let us know and we will send it to them.



### *Art at the American Center*

Char Garder's photo exhibit was on display until March 21. The photos emphasize the color and variety of Vilnius' byways, courtyards, and back alleys. If you are a talented or aspiring artist eager to show your work, please get in touch with Ingrida Šidlauskienė at the American Center. Our number is 266-0330.

### *Folk Concert at Saulės High School in Plungė*

On March 6, PAS intern Maxwell Glen (from Oklahoma) and Professor Steven Warner traveled to the western town of Plungė to talk with over 100 students about American folk music and studying in the United States. Judging by audience reaction and evaluations, the visit was a big success. Students reveled in the unique sound of the banjo as Professor Warner paired up with Director Juozas Milašius, who accompanied on the guitar, to sing folk favorites like "Clementine". If you have a talent and would like to join us as we travel around the country, contact Ingrida Sidlauskiene. And, as always, if you know a place that might enjoy hearing an Embassy representative come talk to their school or group, please let us know.

### *JAM-ing in Vilnius*

The fifth annual Jazz Appreciation Month has almost arrived, and the Embassy is very pleased to kick off the month with the American band **Joe McPhee and "Trio X"**. Every April we pay tribute to a historic and living art form, jazz, a cultural treasure that Americans and Lithuanians share. We invite the public to watch this art of American heritage. The jazz trio inaugurated JAM a bit early with a concert on March 27 in Vilnius Kongresu Rumai.



## Announcement from the Management Section

We often receive questions from American citizens about three topics: 1) Where can I find out about the American Embassy's sales and auctions? 2) Where can I find out about employment opportunities at the American Embassy? 3) Where can I find out about possibilities to contract with the American Embassy?

Fortunately, the answer to all three questions is the same: check out the "Skelbimai" section of the *Lietuvos Rytas* newspaper on Saturdays. Whenever the Embassy has an upcoming sale or auction, job opening for the public, or contract solicitation, we advertise in advance in the "Skelbimai" section of the Saturday *Lietuvos Rytas*.

Please note that American Citizen Town Halls are announced in the *Baltic Times* newspaper, which is published every Friday, and not *Lietuvos Rytas*.

## Next American Citizen's Town Hall Meeting

Please join us for the next American Citizen's Town Hall Meeting on Saturday May 27, 2006. This will be Ambassador Mull's last opportunity to meet with all of you. We look forward to seeing all of you at the American Center at 2:00 on the 27th!

## Other Announcements

The Consular Section will be closed on Friday, April 7, with no American Citizen Services provided that day. We apologize for any inconvenience, but we will be open on Thursday, April 6 and Monday, April 10.

Chris Yarnell and Trevor Boyd have departed Lithuania. Our new Vice Consuls are Michael Dickerson and Alex Titolo (as of April 3).

## ***Health Insurance***

As we discussed in the last Town Hall Meeting, a number of insurance companies offer health coverage that meet requirements for obtaining a residence permit. Listed below are four of the major providers with offices throughout Lithuania. If you have recommendations for additional insurance companies that offer policies meeting residency permit requirements, please forward their names and contact information to us in the Consular Section so that we can share them with the broader community.

The Embassy assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided by any of the companies whose names appear on the following list. We neither recommend nor vouch for any company on the list other than the fact that they are licensed insurance providers.

UAB "ERGO Lietuva gyvybės draudimas"  
Geležinio Vilko str. 6A  
Vilnius  
Tel.: (8-5) 268 3051  
Fax: (8-5) 268 3055  
[www.ergo.lt](http://www.ergo.lt)

UADB "Baltikums draudimas"  
Švitrigailos str. 11D  
Vilnius  
Tel.: (8-5) 239 5323  
[www.baltikums.lt](http://www.baltikums.lt)

AB "Lietuvos draudimas"  
J.Basanavičiaus str. 12  
Vilnius  
Tel.: (8-5) 266 6612  
Fax: (8-5) 231 4138  
[www.lietuvosdraudimas.lt](http://www.lietuvosdraudimas.lt)

UAB "PZU Lietuva gyvybės draudimas"  
Konstitucijos pr. 7  
Vilnius  
Tel: (8-5) 279 0007  
Fax: (8-5) 279 0019  
[www.pzu.lt](http://www.pzu.lt)

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*Embassy Hours for American  
Citizen and Notarial Services:*

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday:**  
1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Friday:**  
9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.,  
1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

*Please Note: Friday, April 7 and  
Wednesdays – no U.S. Citizen  
Services or Notarials (except  
emergencies)*

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## News from the Political Section

### ***Regional Democracy - Part 2 (continued from our last newsletter)***

Lithuania's efforts to build ties among its democratic neighbors and to encourage initiatives in parts of its neighborhood less hospitable to democracy form a key pillar of its foreign policy and one of the highlights of our bilateral relationship. During the last few months, all eyes focused on Belarus in the run-up to the March 19 presidential elections there. Lithuania, with long-standing economic, familial, and cultural ties to Belarus, actively supports attempts to build democracy in Belarus. The U.S. Government and this mission actively support Lithuania in this endeavor.

To that end, Ambassador Mull congratulated the students of European Humanities University International (EHU) at the opening of their spring semester on March 9. The authoritarian government of Belarus forced EHU into exile in 2004 in its campaign to eradicate independent education. The Government of Lithuania responded generously by offering the university a temporary home in Vilnius. The United States and many other international donors, including American NGOs such as the MacArthur Foundation, are committed to helping keep EHU alive. In his remarks, the Ambassador highlighted the importance of independent education, and praised the staff, faculty, and students for their courage and determination to shape the leaders of Belarus's future.

The Ambassador also conveyed the greetings of President Bush to those gathered. The President wrote, "The United States is committed to supporting efforts to advance democracy, prosperity, and security throughout the world. I appreciate the administration, faculty, students, and other supporters of EHU for your dedication to education despite adversity. Your courage is an inspiration to those aspiring to freedom around the world." The Ambassador delivered a framed version of these remarks to the University's director.

Lithuania's support for civil society in Belarus is just one part of its extensive efforts to promote democracy throughout the region. The newly-opened Lithuanian Embassy in Chisinau, Moldova is already a hub of activity, and Lithuanian parliamentarians and parliamentary staff actively cooperate with their Moldovan counterparts to share democracy-building experiences. Lithuania is also helping Georgia realize its aspirations to move closer to the EU and NATO, particularly in the area of defense reform.

The Government of Lithuania will host what promises to be one of the major international gatherings of 2006 when it welcomes world leaders to the Community for Democratic Choice Summit, May 4-5 in Vilnius. The event will bring together firmly established democracies with those working to join the club.



## About Our Mission...

### U.S. Embassy

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LT-03106  
Vilnius

PHONE:  
(370) 5-266-5500

FAX:  
(370) 5-266-5510

CONSULAR  
E-MAIL:  
ConSec@state.gov

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.usembassy.lt](http://www.usembassy.lt)

The United States' principal policy objectives in Lithuania are:

**Regional Stability:** The Mission has no greater goal than working with Lithuania in maximizing our common contribution promoting freedom and security in the world. Above all, this means an active bilateral partnership to make sure that Lithuania gets the assistance it needs to carry out cutting-edge NATO missions, such as its Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. We will also work with Lithuania as it develops niche capabilities that enable its small military to contribute to NATO. Finally, we will encourage Lithuania to continue to serve as an advocate of and role model for pro-democracy forces throughout the former Soviet Union and elsewhere.

**Closer Economic Ties:** Although there are areas of cooperation, our bilateral trade and investment volumes lag behind several of Lithuania's European partners. To improve the situation, we are enlisting the government and resident U.S. firms in a campaign to seek more American involvement in this dynamic economy.

**Democracy:** We are proud of U.S. support for Lithuania's extraordinary success in establishing a strong and vibrant democracy. We will continue those efforts by speaking out in defense of civil society, tolerance, and public probity, and reinforcing those words when possible with training resources.

**Law Enforcement:** Lithuania and the United States share a common interest in combating international crime and terrorism. We will seek to increase the pace of joint operations between U.S. and Lithuanian law enforcement agencies; expand training initiatives with law enforcement officials and the judiciary; and accelerate the pace of extraditions between our two countries.

**Homeland Security:** We seek to uphold U.S. immigration law while ensuring that all qualified Lithuanians have the visas they need to visit our country. In particular, we want to ensure that young Lithuanians, the country's future leaders, continue to travel, study, and work legally in the United States. We will also press the government to liberalize bureaucratic requirements imposed on American residents here.

## Employment in the Embassy for American Citizens

From time to time, the American Embassy advertises job vacancies for Locally Engaged Staff within the mission. American citizens, not otherwise associated with the Embassy, who are considered Ordinarily Resident in Lithuania may apply for such positions if the applicant is in the host country as a citizen, legal permanent resident, or holder of a non-diplomatic visa or holds a work or residency permit. This category also includes all non-U.S. citizen family members who are in their country of citizenship.

This group falls under local labor law and is compensated under the Local Compensation Plan (not a U.S. pay plan): payment of salary is in local currency, and includes payment of Local Social Security contributions, receiving all applicable benefits under LCP. However, employment under this group is subject to withholding of U.S. Federal and any appropriate U.S. state and local income taxes in accordance with applicable tax codes as well as deduction of U.S. social security and Medicare payments.

*All applicants for a position must meet all required qualifications as specified in the vacancy announcement to be considered for employment. All local hire positions are strictly competitive.*